

Teamsters announces October 5 vote deadline

## Vote “no” on the UPS-Teamsters sellout contract! Form rank-and-file committees to organize opposition!

By the WSWS UPS Workers Newsletter  
6 September 2018

On Tuesday, the Teamsters union announced that a vote on the contract covering a quarter million United Parcel Service (UPS) package delivery and warehouse employees in the United States will be counted on October 5, more than two months after the expiration of the current agreement. Ballots are being sent individually to all workers by mail over the next two weeks, and workers will be able to vote electronically at any time before the count.

Since July 10, when the union released its sellout agreement backed by UPS management, it has been engaged in a campaign to wear down rank-and-file opposition to the deal. It has continuously delayed a vote, kept workers completely in the dark and dispatched its officials to local meetings across the country to browbeat workers into voting “yes.”

Typical were the statements of western packaging division director Andy Marshall, who told a room of 100 workers in San Diego Local 542 on August 12 that the contract was the “best they could get,” and that while workers may want more, “when I was a kid, I wanted a pony.” Marshall threatened that workers and their families would lose health coverage if they went on strike, and that the next offer would be worse if they vote “no.”

Speaking at an August 25 “conference call” for Teamsters members at which no questions were allowed, chief “negotiator” Denis Taylor told workers they should stop complaining about the creation of a new lower-paid driving tier in the contract, because there are already many other tiers created in previous sellouts by the Teamsters. “It is no different than what

we have always done,” he declared.

The union’s actions reflect the character of the agreement itself, which workers know is the latest in a long string of sellouts. For the highly exploited part-time warehouse workers, who make up some 70 percent of the employees covered under the deal and start out on as little as \$10 per hour, the deal maintains poverty-level wages. The Teamsters union is hailing as a “victory” the raising of wages to \$15 by 2022—half of what workers earned on the same job four decades ago.

The agreement also creates a “hybrid” category of workers that can be shifted between the warehouses and delivering packages but are paid up to \$6 per hour less than current drivers. This will be used not only to destroy higher-paying driving roles, but to serve as a bridge for extending the working conditions of the warehouses into deliveries.

The union has made no attempt to explain why it is that a “victory” for workers is being celebrated by UPS shareholders, who have pushed up Wall Street stock prices by more than 11 percent since July 10 in anticipation of increased profits arising from the intensified exploitation of the workers.

The Teamsters is saying nothing about UPS management’s plans for a vast cost-cutting and restructuring operation. On September 13, UPS management will hold a public call-in with investors to provide details about the “transformation” plan first announced late last year, involving “enhancing capacity and efficiency through the use of state-of-the-art processes, information technology and automation.”

Many UPS workers are asking themselves how they

can oppose this assault, given that the union is openly siding with the company. As Mike, a driver of 25 years in New York, told the *WSWS*, “We’re supposed to have one enemy, and one guy fighting on our side, but there are two groups against us.”

The *WSWS UPS Workers Newsletter* calls for a “no” vote to reject this rotten sellout. But this alone is insufficient to stop the conspiracy of the Teamsters and UPS management. Contrary to the claims of the Teamsters for a Democratic Union and Teamsters United, which are a faction of the Teamsters apparatus that is calling for a “no” vote, the Teamsters will not respond to a rejection of the contract by seeking a better deal for workers.

The Teamsters is not unaware that workers want higher wages, better conditions and the abolition of tiers. The issue, however, is that the Teamsters represents not the workers, but UPS management and the wealthy upper-middle class executives who control the union. It would respond to a “no” vote with a redoubled effort to push through its concessions, either through ballot fraud or by forcing workers to “vote again until they get it right.”

To oppose this conspiracy, workers require organizations that are independent from both the Teamsters and the company, organizations controlled by the rank and file. For this purpose, the *WSWS UPS Workers Newsletter* urges UPS workers to elect rank-and-file workplace committees in the hubs and warehouses to conduct a struggle.

These committees would demand and organize rank-and-file oversight over the contract voting process, to ensure the integrity of the vote. They would enforce the demand by workers for oversight and the livestreaming of all negotiations. They would provide a means for workers to respond collectively to workplace harassment by the company, as opposed to the Teamsters use of the grievance procedure to isolate and suppress workers’ opposition. And they would draw up workers’ own demands as the basis for a nationwide strike. These should include:

- An immediate 30 percent wage increase
- Abolition of all tiers. Equal pay for all workers performing the same work.
- Allowing all part-time workers to shift to full-time, with a corresponding raise in pay and benefits.
- A reduction in the full-time work week for from 40

to 30 hours, with no loss in pay.

- Workers’ control over production and the setting of safe line speeds and delivery quotas.

The union, the company, both political parties and the media all declare that there is no money for such demands. But this is a lie. UPS itself reported more than \$7 billion in pre-tax profits last year alone, which, added to the almost \$3 billion in dividend payouts to shareholders, is enough to provide every UPS worker around the world with an immediate \$23,000 raise.

A successful struggle requires turning out to other sections of workers who confront the same exploitative conditions and have the same interests. There is immense support for such a fight in the working class. Following the wildcat walkouts earlier this year, teachers across the US are returning to school and launching strikes, including in Washington and California. More than 18,000 US Steel workers have been forced by the United Steelworkers union to work without a contract for a week, while the company demands the creation of a new tier of workers making 20 percent less.

Rank-and-file workplace committees should send delegations to workers at Amazon, USPS, steelworkers, autoworkers, teachers and other sections of the working class to explain the significance of the fight at UPS and organize a united struggle. The logic of such a strategy is a general strike.

*We urge workers who want more information and assistance with establishing rank-and-file workplace committees to contact us.*

To contact the *WSWS* and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>